

TRADITIONAL COSMOLOGY AND MODERN SCIENCE

(I) *Cosmologia Perennis*

IN WHAT FOLLOWS attention will be drawn to certain fissures in Modern science, and these will be judged by means of the criteria provided by cosmology in the traditional sense of this term. We know that the Greek word *cosmos* means 'order', implying the ideas of unity and totality. Cosmology is thus the science of the world inasmuch as this reflects its unique cause, Being. This reflection of the uncreated in the created necessarily presents itself under diverse aspects, and even under an indefinite variety of aspects, each of which has about it something whole and total, so that there are a multiplicity of visions of the cosmos, all equally possible and legitimate and springing from the same universal and immutable principles.

These principles, by reason of their very universality, are essentially inherent in human intelligence at its most profound; but this pure intellect only becomes 'disengaged', generally speaking and for the man who is predisposed thereto, with the aid of supernatural elements that an authentic and complete spiritual tradition alone can supply. This means that all genuine cosmology is attached to a divine revelation, even if the object it considers and the mode of its expression apparently lie outside the message that this revelation brings.

Such is the case, for instance, with Christian cosmology, whose origin at first sight appears somewhat heterogeneous, since on the one hand it refers to the Biblical account of creation, while on the other hand it bases itself on the heritage of the Greek cosmologists; if there seems to be a certain eclecticism here, it should be stressed that this is providential, since the two sources in question complement one another in a harmonious way, the first being presented in the form of a myth and the other under the form of a doctrine expressed in more or

less rational terms, and thus neutral from the point of view of symbolism and of a spiritual perspective.

Moreover, there can only be a question of syncretism where there is a mixture, and hence a confusion, of planes and modes of expression. The Biblical myth of creation and Greek cosmology do not present any formally incompatible perspectives, nor do they duplicate one another, as would be the case, for example, if one attempted to mingle Buddhist cosmology with the figurative teaching of the Bible. The Biblical myth assumes the form of a drama, a divine action that seems to unfold in time, distinguishing the principal and the relative by a 'before' and an 'after'. Greek cosmology, for its part, corresponds to an essentially static vision of things; it depicts the structure of the world, such as it is 'now and always', as a hierarchy of degrees of existence, of which the lower are conditioned by time, space, and number, while the higher are situated beyond temporal succession and spatial or other limits. This doctrine thus presents itself quite naturally and providentially as a scientific commentary on the scriptural symbolism.

The Biblical myth is revealed, but Greek cosmology is likewise not of purely human origin; even with Aristotle, that distant founder of Western rationalism, certain basic ideas, like his distinction between form (*eidos*) and matter (*hyle*), for example, undoubtedly spring from a knowledge that is supra-rational, and therefore timeless and sacred. Aristotle translates this wisdom into a homogeneous dialectic, and his dialectic is valid because the law inherent in thought reflects in its own way the law of existence. At the same time, he demonstrates reality only to the extent that it can be logically defined. Plato and Plotinus go much further; they transcend the 'objectivized' cosmology of Aristotle, and restore to symbolism all its supra-rational significance. Christian cosmology borrowed the analytical thought of Aristotle, but it was from Plato that it derived the doctrine of archetypes that justifies symbolism and confirms the primacy of intellectual intuition over discursive thought.

The keystone of all Christian cosmology and the element that renders possible the linking of the Biblical myth with the Greek heritage is the evangelical doctrine of the Logos as source of both existence and

knowledge. This doctrine, which in itself transcends the plane of cosmology the Gospels contain hardly any cosmological elements constitutes nonetheless its spiritual axis; it is through this doctrine that the science of the created is connected with the knowledge of the uncreated. It is thus through its link with metaphysics comprised in this case in the Johannine doctrine of the Word that cosmology is in agreement with theology. It is first of all a prolongation of gnosis; thereafter an *ancilla theologiae*.

The same can be said of all traditional cosmologies and in particular of those belonging to Islam and Judaism; their immutable axis is always a revealed doctrine of the Spirit or Intellect, whether this be conceived as uncreated (as in the case of the Word) or as created (as with the first Intellect) or as having two aspects, one created and the other uncreated.¹

We know that there were frequent exchanges between the Christian, Moslem, and Jewish cosmologists, and the same certainly occurred between the Hellenistic cosmologists and certain Asiatic civilizations; but it goes without saying (as Guénon pointed out) that the family resemblance between all the traditional cosmologies had generally speaking nothing to do with historical borrowings, for in the first place there is the nature of things and, after that, there is intuitive knowledge. This knowledge, as we have said, must be vivified by a sacred science, the written and oral repository of a divine revelation. Be that as it may, everything is definitively contained within our own soul, whose lower ramifications are identified with the domain of the senses, but whose root reaches to pure Being and the supreme Essence, so that man grasps within himself the axis of the cosmos. He can 'measure' the whole of its 'vertical' dimension, and in this connection his knowledge of the world can be adequate, in spite of the fact that he will always be ignorant of much, or even nearly all, of its 'horizontal' extension. It is thus perfectly possible for traditional cosmology to possess, as it does, a knowledge that is real and incomparably more vast

¹ Ibn 'Arabî says the same in speaking of *ar-Rû*, the Universal Spirit, in accordance with certain Koranic formulations. As for the first Intellect (*nous*) of Plotinus, it can also be regarded under these two aspects; the Plotinian doctrine of divine emanations does not introduce the distinction created-uncreated.

and profound than that offered by the modern empirical sciences while retaining childlike (or, more precisely, 'human') opinions about realities of the physical order.

Western cosmology fell out of favour the moment the ancient geocentric system of the world was replaced by the heliocentric system of Copernicus. For that to be possible, cosmology had to be reduced to mere cosmography; thus the form was confused with the content, and the one was rejected with the other. In reality, the medieval conception of the physical world, of its ordonnance and of its extension, not only corresponded to a natural, and therefore realistic vision of things, it also expressed a spiritual order in which man had his organic place.

Let us pause for a moment at this vision of the world, known to us especially through the poetic works of Dante.² The planetary heavens and the heaven of fixed stars that surrounds them were presented as so many concentric spheres 'the vaster they are, the greater their virtue', as Dante explained whose extreme limit, the invisible heaven of the Empyrean, is identified both with universal space and pure duration. Spatially, it represents a sphere of unlimited radius, and temporally, it is the background of all movement. Its continual rotation bears along with it all inferior movements, which are measured in relation to it, though it cannot itself be measured in any absolute way, since time cannot be divided except by reference to the marking out of a movement in space.

These spheres symbolize the higher states of consciousness and, more exactly, the modalities of the soul which, while still contained within the integral individuality, are more and more irradiated by the Divine Spirit. It is the Empyrean, the 'threshold' between time and non-time, that represents the extreme limit of the individual or formal world. It is in crossing this limit that Dante obtains a new vision, one that is to some extent inverse to the cosmic order. Up to that point the

² There has been much discussion as to whether the *Divine Comedy* was influenced by an Islamic model; though possible in itself, it is not necessarily so, given that the symbolism in question resulted on the one hand from the spiritual realities themselves and on the other from the Ptolemaic system that was common to both Christian and Moslem civilizations in the Middle Ages.

hierarchy of existence, which goes from corporeal to spiritual, expresses itself through a gradual expansion of space, the container being the cause and master of the contained. At this point the Divine Being reveals itself as the centre around which the angels revolve in closer and closer choirs. In reality there is no symmetry between the two orders, planetary and angelic, for God is at one and the same time the centre and container of all things. It is the physical order alone, that of the starry firmament, that represents the reflection of the superior order.

As for the circles of hell, which Dante³ describes as a pit sunk into the earth as far as the 'point toward which all heaviness tends', they are not the inverse reflection but the opposite of the heavenly spheres. They are, as it were, these spheres overturned, whereas the mountain of purgatory, which the poet tells us was formed from the earth cast up by Lucifer in the course of his fall towards the centre of gravity, is properly speaking a compensation for hell. By this localization of hell and purgatory, Dante did not intend to establish a geography; he was not deluded concerning the provisional character of the symbolism, although he obviously believed in the geocentric system of Ptolemy.

The heliocentric system itself admits of an obvious symbolism, since it identifies the centre of the world with the source of light. Its rediscovery by Copernicus,⁴ however, produced no new spiritual vision of the world; rather it was comparable to the popularization of an esoteric truth. The heliocentric system had no common measure with the subjective experiences of people; in it man had no organic place. Instead of helping the human mind to go beyond itself and to consider things in terms of the immensity of the cosmos, it only encouraged a materialistic Prometheanism which, far from being superhuman, ended by becoming inhuman.

³ With regard to the symbolical localization of the hells, medieval authors differ and seem to contradict one another. For Dante, the hells are situated beneath the earth, which means that they correspond to inferior states; for others, and especially for certain Moslem Cosmologists, they are to be found 'between heaven and earth', in other words, in the subtle world.

⁴ For it is not a case of an unprecedented discovery. Copernicus himself refers to Nicetas of Syracuse as also to certain quotations in Plutarch.

Strictly speaking, a Modern cosmology does not exist, in spite of the misuse of language whereby the Modern science of the sensible universe is called cosmology. In fact, the Modern science of nature expressly limits itself to the corporeal domain alone, which it isolates from the total cosmos while considering things in their purely spatial and temporal phenomenality, as if supra-sensible reality with its differing levels were nothing at all and as if that reality were not knowable by means of the intellect, in which it is analogically inherent by virtue of the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm. But the point we wish to stress here is the following: scientism is an objectivism which purports to be mathematical and exclusive. Because of this, it behaves as if the human subject did not exist, or as if this subject were not the subtle mirror indispensable for the phenomenal appearance of the world. It is deliberately ignored that the subject is the guarantor of the logical continuity of the world and, in its intellectual essence, the witness of all objective reality.

In fact, a knowledge that is 'objective', and thus independent of particular subjectivities presupposes immutable criteria, and these could not exist if there were not in the individual subject itself an impartial background, a witness transcending the individual, in other words the intellect. After all, knowledge of the world presupposes the underlying unity of the knowing subject, so that one might say of a voluntarily agnostic science what Meister Eckhart said about atheists: 'The more they blaspheme God, the more they praise Him'. The more science affirms an exclusively 'objective' order of things, the more it manifests the underlying unity of the intellect or spirit; it does this indirectly, unconsciously, and in spite of itself in other words, contrarily to its own thesis but when all is said and done, it proclaims in its own way what it purports to deny. In the perspective of scientism, the total human subject composed of sensibility, reason, and intellect is illusorily replaced by mathematical thought alone. According to a scientist of the present century,⁵ 'All true progress in natural science consists in its disengaging itself more and more from subjectivity and in bringing out more and more clearly what exists independently of human conception, without troubling itself with the fact that the result has no

⁵ Sir James Jeans, *The New Background of Science* (Cambridge, 1933).

longer anything but the most distant resemblance to what the original perception took for real.' According to this declaration, which is considered to be authoritative, the subjectivity from which one is to break loose is not reducible to the intrusion of sensorial accidents and emotional impulsions into the order of objective knowledge; it is the complete 'human conception' of things in other words, both direct sensory perception and its spontaneous assimilation by the imagination which is called in question; only mathematical thought is allowed to be objective or true. Mathematical thought in fact allows a maximum of generalization while remaining bound to number, so that it can be verified on the quantitative plane; but it in no wise includes the whole of reality as it is communicated to us by our senses. It makes a selection from out of this total reality, and the scientific prejudice of which we have just been speaking regards as unreal everything that this selection leaves out. Thus it is that those sensible qualities called 'secondary', such as colours, odours, savours, and the sensations of hot and cold, are considered to be subjective impressions implying no objective quality, and possessing no other reality than that belonging to their indirect physical causes, as for example, in the case of colours, the various frequencies of light waves: 'Once it be admitted that in principle the sensible qualities cannot automatically be looked on as being qualities of the things themselves, physics offers us an entirely homogeneous and certain system, which answers every question as to what really underlies those colours, sounds, temperatures, etc'.⁶ What is this homogeneity but the result of a reduction of the qualitative aspects of nature to quantitative modalities? Modern science thus asks us to sacrifice a goodly part of what constitutes for us the reality of the world, and offers us in exchange mathematical formulae whose only advantage is to help us to manipulate matter on its own plane, which is that of quantity.

This mathematical selection from out of total reality does not only eliminate the 'secondary' qualities of perception, it also removes what the Greek philosophers and the Scholastics called 'form', in other words, the qualitative 'seal' imprinted on matter by the unique essence of a being or a thing. For modern science, the essential form does not

⁶ B. Bavink, *Hauptfragen der heutigen Naturphilosophie* (Berlin, 1928).

exist: 'Some rare Aristotelians', writes a theoretician of modern science,⁷ 'still perhaps think they can intuitively attain, through some illumination by the active intellect, the essential ideas of the things of nature; but this is nothing but a beautiful dream... The essences of things cannot be contemplated, they must be discovered by experience, by means of a laborious work of investigation'. To this a Plotinus, an Avicenna, or a St. Albert the Great would reply that in nature there is nothing more evident than the essences of things, since these manifest themselves in the 'forms' themselves. Only, they cannot be discovered by a 'laborious work of investigation' nor measured quantitatively; in fact the intuition that grasps them relies directly on sensory perception and imagination, inasmuch as the latter synthesizes the impressions received from outside.

In any case, what is this human reason that tries to grasp the essences of things by a 'laborious work of investigation'? Either this faculty of reason is truly capable of attaining its objects, or it is not. We know that reason is limited, but we also know that it is able to conceive truths that are independent of individuals, and that therefore a universal law is manifested in it. If human intelligence is not merely 'organized matter' in which case it would not be intelligence this means that it necessarily participates in a transcendent principle. Without entering into a philosophical discussion on the nature of reason, we can compare the relationship between it and its supra-individual source (which medieval cosmology calls the 'active intellect' and, in a more general sense, the 'first intellect') to the relationship between a reflection and its luminous source, and this image will be both more ample and more accurate than any philosophical definition. A reflection is always limited by the nature of its plane of reflection in the case of reason, this plane is the mind and, in a more general sense, the human psyche but the nature of light remains essentially the same, in its source as in its reflection. The same applies to the spirit, whatever be the formal limits a particular plane of reflection imposes on it. Now spirit is essentially and wholly knowledge; in itself it is subject to no

⁷ Josef Geiser, *Allgemeine Philosophie des Seins und der Natur* (Münster i. W., 1915).

external constraint, and in principle nothing can prevent it from knowing itself and at the same time knowing all the possibilities contained within itself. Therein lies the mode of access, not to the material structure of things in particular and in detail, but to their permanent essences.

All true cosmological knowledge is founded on the qualitative aspect of things, in other words, on 'forms' inasmuch as these are the mark of the essence. Because of this, cosmology is both direct and speculative, for it grasps the qualities of things in a direct way, and does not call them in question, and at the same time it disengages these qualities from their particular attachments so as to be able to consider them at their different levels of manifestation. In this way, the universe reveals its internal unity and at the same time shows the inexhaustible spectrum of its aspects and dimensions. That this vision should often have something poetic about it is obviously not to its detriment, since all genuine poetry comprises a presentiment of the essential harmony of the world; it was in this sense that Mohammed could say: 'Surely there is a part of wisdom in poetry'.

If one can reproach this vision of the world for being more contemplative than practical and for neglecting the material connections of things (which in reality is hardly a reproach), it can on the other hand be said about scientism that it empties the world of its qualitative sap. The traditional vision of things is above all 'static' and 'vertical'. It is static because it refers to constant and universal qualities, and it is vertical in the sense that it attaches the lower to the higher, the ephemeral to the imperishable. The modern vision, on the contrary, is fundamentally 'dynamic' and 'horizontal'; it is not the symbolism of things that interests it, but their material and historical connections.

The great argument in favour of the modern science of nature an argument that counts for much in the eyes of the crowd (whatever may be the reservations of men of science themselves) is its technical application; this, it is believed, proves the validity of the scientific principles,⁸ as if a fragmentary and in some respects problematical efficacy could be a proof of their intrinsic and total value. In reality, modern

⁸ It is a fact, however, that most of the great technical inventions were effected on the basis of inadequate and even false theories.

science displays a certain number of fissures that are due to the fact that the world of phenomena is indefinite and that therefore no science can ever hope to exhaust it; these fissures derive above all from modern science's systematic exclusion of all the non-corporeal dimensions of reality. They manifest themselves right down to the foundations of modern science, and in domains as seemingly 'exact' as that of physics; they become gaping cracks when one turns to the disciplines connected with the study of life, not to mention psychology, where an empiricism that is relatively valid in the physical order encroaches in bizarre fashion on a foreign field. These fissures, which do not merely affect the theoretical domain, are far from harmless; on the contrary, in their technical consequences, they constitute so many seeds of catastrophe.

Because the mathematical conception of things inevitably participates in the schematic and discontinuous character of number, it neglects, in the vast web of nature, everything that consists of pure continuity and of relations subtly kept in balance. Now, continuity and equilibrium exist before discontinuity and before crisis; they are more real than these latter, and incomparably more precious.

(II) Modern Physics

In modern physics the space in which the heavenly bodies move, as also the space traversed by the trajectories of the minutest bodies such as electrons, is conceived as a void. The purely mathematical definition of the spatial and temporal relationships between various bodies great or small is thereby rendered easier. In reality, a corporeal 'point' 'suspended' in a total void would have no relationship whatever with any other corporeal 'points'; it would, so to speak, fall back into nothingness. One blithely speaks of 'fields of force', but by what are these fields supported? A totally empty space cannot exist; it is only an abstraction, an arbitrary idea that serves only to show where mathematical thinking can lead when arbitrarily detached from a concrete intuition of things.

According to traditional cosmology, ether fills all space without distinction. We know that modern physics denies the existence of ether, since it has been established that it offers no resistance to the

rotatory movement of the earth; but it is forgotten that this quintessential element which is at the basis of all material differentiations, is not itself distinguished by any particular quality, so that it offers no opposition to anything whatsoever. It represents the continuous ground whence all material discontinuities detach themselves.

If modern science accepted the existence of ether, it might perhaps find an answer to the question whether light is propagated as a wave or as a corpuscular emanation; most probably its movement is neither one nor the other, and its apparently contradictory properties are explainable by the fact that it is most directly attached to ether and participates in the indistinctly continuous nature of the latter.

An indistinct continuum cannot be divided into a series of like units; if it does not necessarily escape from time or space, it nevertheless eludes graduated measurements. This is especially true of the speed of light, which always appears the same, independently of the movement of its observer, whether the latter moves in the same direction or in the opposite direction. The speed of light thus represents a limit value; it can neither be overtaken nor caught up with by any other movement, and this is like the physical expression of the simultaneity proper to the act of the intelligible light.

We know that the discovery of the fact that the speed of light, when measured both in the direction of the rotation of the earth and in the direction opposite to that rotation, is invariable, has confronted modern astronomers with the alternative either of accepting the immobility of the earth or else of rejecting the usual notions of time and space. Thus it was that Einstein was led into considering space and time as two relative dimensions, variable in function of the state of movement of the observer, the only constant dimension being the speed of light. The latter would everywhere and always be the same, whereas time and space vary in relation to one another: it is as if space could shrink in favour of time, and inversely.

If it be admitted that a movement is definable in terms of a certain relationship of time and space, it is contradictory to maintain that it is a movement, that of light, that measures space and time. It is true that on a quite different plane when it is a question of the intelligible light the image of light 'measuring' the cosmos and realizing it thereby is not devoid of deep meaning. But what we have in view here is the

physical order, which alone is considered, and with good cause, by Einstein's theory; it is therefore in this context that we will put the following question: what is this famous 'constant number' that is supposed to express the speed of light? How can movement having a definite speed and its definition will always be a relationship between space and time itself be a quasi-'absolute' measure of these two conditions of the physical world? Is there not here a confusion between the principal and quantitative domains? That the movement of light is the fundamental 'measure' of the corporeal world we willingly believe, but why should this measure itself be a number, and even a definite number? Moreover, do the experiments which are supposed to prove the constant character of the speed of light really get beyond the earthly sphere, and do they not imply both space and time as usually imagined by us? Thus '300,000 km per second' is stated to be the speed of light, and it is held that here is a value which, if it be not necessarily everywhere expressed in this manner, does nonetheless remain constant throughout the physical universe. The astronomer who counts, by referring to the lines of the spectrum, the light-years separating us from the nebula of Andromeda, supposes without more ado that the universe is every-where 'woven' in the same manner. Now, what would happen if the constant character of the speed of light ever came to be doubted and there is every likelihood that it will be sooner or later so that the only fixed pivot of Einstein's theory would fall down? The whole modern conception of the universe would immediately dissolve like a mirage.

We are told that reality does not necessarily correspond with our inborn conceptions of time and space; but at the same time it is never doubted for a moment that the physical universe conforms with certain mathematical formulas which necessarily proceed from axioms that are no less inborn.

In the same order of ideas mention must also be made of the theory according to which interstellar space is not the space of Euclid, but a space that does not admit the Euclidean axiom regarding parallel lines. Such a space, it is said, flows back on itself, without its being possible to assign to it a definite curve. One might see in this theory an expression of spatial indefinitude, since in fact space is neither finite nor infinite, something which the Ancients indicated by comparing space to

a sphere whose radius exceeds every measure, and which itself is contained in the Universal Spirit. But this is not how modern theoreticians understand things, for they declare that our immediate conception of space is quite simply false and incomplete, and that we must therefore familiarize ourselves with non-Euclidean space, which, they say, is accessible to a disciplined imagination. Now this is simply not true, for non-Euclidean space is accessible only indirectly, namely, from the starting-point of Euclidean space, which thus remains the qualitative model for every conceivable kind of space. In this case, as in many others, modern science tries mathematically to go beyond the logic inherent in the imagination, and then to violate this by dint of mathematical principles, as if every intellectual faculty other than purely mathematical thought were suspect.

In conformity with this mathematical schematism, matter itself is conceived as being discontinuous, for atoms, and their constituent particles, are supposed to be even more isolated in space than are the stars. Whatever the current conception of the atomic order may be and theories on this subject change at a disconcerting speed it is always a case of groupings of corporeal 'points'.

Let us here recall the traditional doctrine of matter:⁹ it is from the starting-point of 'first matter' that the world is constituted, by successive differentiation, under the 'non-acting' action of the form-bestowing Essence; but this *materia prima* is not tangible matter, it underlies all finite existence, and even its nearest modality, *materia signata quantitate*, which is the basis of the corporeal world, is not manifested as such. According to a most judicious expression of Boethius,¹⁰ it is by its 'form' in other words, its qualitative aspect that a thing is known, 'form being like a light by means of which we know what a thing is'. Now *materia* as such is precisely that which is not yet formed and which by that very fact eludes all distinctive knowing. The world that is accessible to distinctive knowledge thus extends between two poles that are manifested as such (the form-bestowing Essence and undifferentiated *materia*) just as the range of colours in the spectrum unfolds

⁹ René Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland, 1972), Chapter 2, 'Materia Signata Quantitate'.

¹⁰ *De Unitate et Uno*.

through the refraction of white and therefore colourless light in a medium that is also colourless.

Modern science, which despite its pragmatism is not behindhand in claiming to offer a complete and comprehensive explanation of the sensible universe, strives to reduce the whole qualitative richness of this universe to a certain structure of matter, conceived as a variable grouping of minute bodies, whether these be defined as genuine bodies or as simple 'points' of energy. This means that all the 'bundles' of sensible qualities, everything that constitutes the world for us, except space and time, have to be reduced, scientifically speaking, to a series of atomic 'models' definable in terms of the number, mass, trajectories, and speeds of the minute bodies concerned. It is obvious that this reduction is in vain, for although these 'models' still comprise certain qualitative elements if only their imaginary spatial form it is nonetheless a question of the reduction of quality to quantity and quantity can never comprehend quality.

On the other hand, the elimination of the qualitative aspects in favour of a tighter and tighter mathematical definition of atomic structure must necessarily reach a limit, beyond which precision gives way to the indeterminate. This is exactly what is happening with modern atomist science, in which mathematical reflection is being more and more replaced by statistics and calculations of probability, and in which the very laws of causality seem to be facing bankruptcy. If the 'forms' of things are 'lights', as Boethius said, the reduction of the qualitative to the quantitative can be compared to the action of a man who puts out all the lights the better to scrutinize the nature of darkness.

Modern science can never reach that matter that is at the basis of this world. But between the qualitatively differentiated world and undifferentiated matter lies something like an intermediate zone and this is chaos. The sinister dangers of atomic fission are but one signpost indicating the frontier of chaos and dissolution.

(III) Traditional Symbolism & Modern Empiricism

If the ancient cosmogonies seem childish when one takes their symbolism literally and this means not understanding them modern theories about the origin of the world are frankly absurd. They are so, not

so much in their mathematical formulations, but because of the total unawareness with which their authors set themselves up as sovereign witnesses of cosmic becoming, while at the same time claiming that the human mind itself is a product of this becoming. What connection is there between that primordial nebula that vortex of matter whence they wish to derive earth, life, and man and this little mental mirror that loses itself in conjectures (since for the scientists intelligence amounts to no more than this) and yet feels so sure of discovering the logic of things within itself?

How can the effect make judgements regarding its own cause? And if there exist constant laws of nature those of causality, number, space, and time and something which, within ourselves, has the fight to say 'this is true and this is false', where is the guarantee of truth, either in the object or in the subject? Is the nature of our mind merely a little foam on the waves of the cosmic ocean, or is there to be found deep within it a timeless witness of reality?

Some protagonists of the theories in question will perhaps say that they are concerned only with the physical and objective domain, without seeking to prejudge the domain of the subjective. They can perhaps cite Descartes, who defined spirit and matter as two realities, co-ordinated by Providence, but separated in fact. In point of fact, this division of reality into watertight compartments served to prepare people's minds to leave aside everything that is not of the physical order, as if man were not himself proof of the complexity of the real.

The man of antiquity, who pictured the earth as an island surrounded by the primordial ocean and covered by the dome of heaven, and the medieval man, who saw the heavens as concentric spheres extending from the earth (viewed as the centre) to the limitless sphere of the Divine Spirit, were no doubt mistaken regarding the true disposition and proportions of the sensible universe. On the other hand, they were fully conscious of the fact infinitely more important that this corporeal world is not the whole of reality, and that it is as if surrounded and pervaded by a reality, both greater and more subtle, that in its turn is contained in the Spirit; and they knew, indirectly or directly, that the world in all its extension disappears in the face of the Infinite.

Modern man knows that the earth is only a ball suspended in a bottomless abyss and carried along in a dizzy and complex movement,

and that this movement is governed by other celestial bodies incomparably larger than this earth and situated at immense distances from it. He knows that the earth on which he lives is but a grain in comparison with the sun, which itself is but a grain amidst other incandescent stars, and that all is in motion. An irregularity in this assemblage of sidereal movements, an interference from a star foreign to our planetary system, a deviation of the sun's trajectory, or any other cosmic accident, would suffice to make the earth unsteady in its rotation, to trouble the course of the seasons, to change the atmosphere, and to destroy mankind. Modern man also knows that the smallest atom contains forces which, if unleashed, could involve the earth in an almost instantaneous conflagration. All of this, from the 'infinitely small' to the 'infinitely great', presents itself, from the point of view of Modern science, as a mechanism of unimaginable complexity, the functioning of which is only due to blind forces.

In spite of this, the man of our time lives and acts as if the normal and habitual operation of the rhythms of nature were something that was guaranteed to him. In actual practice, he thinks neither of the abysses of the stellar world nor of the terrible forces latent in every particle of matter. He sees the sky above him like any child sees it, with its sun and its stars, but the remembrance of the astronomical theories prevents him from recognizing divine signs in them. The sky for him is no longer the natural expression of the Spirit that enfolds and illuminates the world. Scientific knowledge has substituted itself for this 'naive' and yet profound vision, not as a new consciousness of a vaster cosmic order, an order of which man forms part, but as an estrangement, as an irremediable disarray before abysses that no longer have any common measure with him. For nothing now reminds him that in reality this whole universe is contained within himself, not of course in his individual being, but in the spirit or intellect that is within him and that is both greater than himself and the whole phenomenal universe.

(IV) Evolutionism

The least phenomenon participates in several continuities or cosmic dimensions incommensurable in relation to each other; thus, ice is water as regards its substance and in this respect it is indistinguishable from liquid water or water vapour but as regards its state it belongs to the class of solid bodies. Similarly, when a thing is constituted by diverse elements, it participates in their natures while being different from them. Cinnabar, for example, is a synthesis of sulphur and mercury; it is thus in one sense the sum of these two elements, but at the same time it possesses qualities that are not to be found in either of these two substances. Quantities can be added to one another, but a quality is never merely the sum of other qualities.

By mixing the colours blue and yellow, green is obtained; this third colour is thus a synthesis of the other two, but it is not the product of a simple addition, for it represents at the same time a chromatic quality that is new and unique in itself.

There is here something like a 'discontinuous continuity', which is even more marked in the biological order, where the qualitative unity of an organism is plainly distinguishable from its material composition. The bird that is born from the egg is made from the same elements as the egg, but it is not the egg. Likewise, the butterfly that emerges from a chrysalis is neither that chrysalis nor the caterpillar that produced it. A kinship exists between these various organisms, a genetic continuity, but they also display a qualitative discontinuity, since between the caterpillar and the butterfly there is something like a rupture of level.

At every point in the cosmic web there is thus a warp and a woof that intersect one another, and this is indicated by the traditional symbolism of weaving, according to which the threads of the warp, which hang vertically on the primitive loom, represent the permanent essences of things and thus also the essential qualities and forms while the woof, which binds horizontally the threads of the warp, and at the same time covers them with its alternating waves, corresponds to the substantial or 'material' continuity of the world.¹¹

¹¹ René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, chapter on the symbolism of weaving.

The same law is expressed by classical hylomorphism, which distinguishes the 'form' of a thing or being the seal of its essential unity from its 'matter', namely the plastic substance which receives this seal and furnishes it with a concrete and limited existence. No modern theory has ever been able to replace this ancient theory, for the fact of reducing the whole plenitude of the real to one or other of its 'dimensions' hardly amounts to an explanation of it. Modern science is ignorant above all of what the Ancients designated by the term 'form', precisely because it is here a question of a non-quantitative aspect of things, and this ignorance is not unconnected with the fact that modern science sees no criterion in the beauty or ugliness of a phenomenon: the beauty of a thing is the sign of its internal unity, its conformity with an indivisible essence, and thus with a reality that will not let itself be counted or measured.

It is necessary to point out here that the notion of 'form' necessarily includes a twofold meaning: on the one hand it means the delimitation of a thing, and this is its most usual meaning; in this connection, form is situated on the side of matter or, in a more general sense, on the side of plastic substance, which limits and separates realities.¹² On the other hand, 'form' understood in the sense given to it by the Greek philosophers and following them the Scholastics, is the aggregate of qualities pertaining to a being or a thing, and thus the expression or the trace of its immutable essence.

The individual world is the 'formal' world because it is the domain of those realities that are constituted by the conjunction of a 'form' and a 'matter', whether subtle or corporeal. It is only in connection with a 'matter', a plastic substance, that 'form' plays the role of a principle of individuation; in itself, in its ontological basis, it is not an individual reality but an archetype, and as such beyond limitations and change. Thus a species is an archetype, and if it is only manifested by the individuals that belong to it, it is nevertheless just as real, and even incomparably more real, than they. As for the rationalist objection that tries to prove the absurdity of the doctrine of archetypes by arguing that a

¹² In Hindu parlance, the distinction *nâma-rûpa*, 'name and form', is related to this aspect of the notion under study, 'name' here standing for the essence of a being or thing, and 'form' for its limited and outward existence.

multiplication of mental notions would imply a corresponding multiplication of archetypes leading to the idea of the idea of the idea, and so on it quite misses the point, since multiplicity can in no wise be transposed onto the level of the archetypal roots. The latter are distinguished in a principal way, within Being and by virtue of Being; in this connection, Being can be envisaged as a unique and homogeneous crystal potentially containing all possible crystalline forms.¹³ Multiplicity and quantity thus only exist at the level of the 'material' reflections of the archetypes.

From what has just been said, it follows that a species is in itself an immutable 'form'; it cannot evolve and be transformed into another species, although it may include variants, which are diverse 'projections' of a unique essential form, from which they can never be detached, any more than the branches of a tree can be detached from the trunk.

It has been justly said¹⁴ that the whole thesis of the evolution of species, inaugurated by Darwin, is founded on a confusion between species and simple variation. Its advocates put forward as the 'bud' or the beginning of a new species what in reality is no more than a variant within the framework of a determinate specific type. This false assimilation is, however, not enough to fill the numberless gaps that occur in the paleontological succession of species; not only are related species separated by profound gaps, but there do not even exist any forms that would indicate any possible connection between different orders such as fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals. One can doubtless find some fishes that use their fins to crawl onto a bank, but one will seek in vain in these fins for the slightest beginning of that articulation which would render possible the formation of an arm or a paw. Likewise, if there are certain resemblances between reptiles and birds, their respective skeletons are nonetheless of a fundamentally different

¹³ It is self-evident that all the images that one can offer of the non-separative distinction of the possibilities contained in Being must remain imperfect and paradoxical.

¹⁴ Douglas Dewar, *The Transformist Illusion* (Dehoff Publications, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 1957). See also Louis Bounoure, *Déterminisme et Finalité* (Collection Philosophie, Flammarion, Paris).

structure. Thus, for example, the very complex articulation in the jaws of a bird, and the related organization of its hearing apparatus, pertain to an entirely different plan from the one found in reptiles; it is difficult to conceive how one might have developed from the other.¹⁵ As for the famous fossil bird *Archaeopteryx*, it is fairly and squarely a bird, despite the claws at the end of its wings, its teeth, and its long tail.¹⁶

In order to explain the absence of intermediate forms, the partisans of transformism have sometimes argued that these forms must have disappeared because of their very imperfection and precariousness; but this argument is plainly in contradiction with the principle of selection that is supposed to be the operative factor in the evolution of species: the trial forms should be incomparably more numerous than the ancestors having already acquired a definitive form. Besides, if the evolution of species represents, as is declared, a gradual and continual process, all the real links in the chain—therefore all those that are destined to be followed—will be both endpoints and intermediaries, in which case it is difficult to see why the ones would be much more precarious than the others.¹⁷

The more conscientious among modern biologists either reject the transformist theory, or else maintain it as a 'working hypothesis', being unable to conceive any genesis of species that would not be situated on the 'horizontal line' of a purely physical and temporal becoming. For Jean Rostand,

¹⁵ Dewar, *The Transformist Illusion*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Teilhard de Chardin (*The Human Phenomenon*, p. 129) writes on this subject: 'Nothing is by nature so delicate and fugitive as a beginning. As long as a zoological group is young, its characteristics remain undecided. Its dimensions are weak. Relatively few individuals compose it, and these are rapidly changing. Both in space and duration, the peduncle (or the bud, which comes to the same thing) of a living branch corresponds to a minimum of differentiation, expansion, and resistance. How then is time going to act on this weak zone? Inevitably by destroying it in its vestiges.' This reasoning, which abusively exploits the purely external and conventional analogy between a genealogical 'tree' and a real plant, is an example of the 'imaginative abstraction' that characterizes this author's thought.

the world postulated by transformism is a fairly-like world, phantasmagoric, surrealistic. The chief point, to which one always returns, is that we have never been present, even in a small way, at one authentic phenomenon of evolution ... we keep the impression that nature today has nothing to offer that might be capable of reducing our embarrassment before the veritably organic metamorphoses implied in the transformist thesis. We keep the impression that, in the matter of the genesis of species as in that of the genesis of life, the forces that constructed nature are now absent from nature...¹⁸

Even so, this biologist sticks to the transformist theory:

I firmly believe because I see no means of doing otherwise that mammals have come from lizards, and lizards from fish; but when I declare and when I think such a thing, I try not to avoid seeing its indigestible enormity and I prefer to leave vague the origin of these scandalous metamorphoses rather than add to their improbability that of a ludicrous interpretation.¹⁹

All that paleontology proves to us is that the various animal forms, such as are shown by fossils preserved in successive earthly layers, made their appearance in a vaguely ascending order, going from relatively undifferentiated organisms but not simple ones²⁰ to ever more complex forms, without this ascension representing, however, an unequivocal and continuous line. It seems to move in jumps; in other words, whole categories of animals appear all at once, without real predecessors. What does this order mean? Simply that, on the material plane, the simple or relatively undifferentiated always precedes the complex and differentiated. All 'matter' is like a mirror that reflects the activity of the essences, while also inverting it; this is why the seed comes before the tree and the bud before the flower, whereas in the principal order the perfect 'forms' pre-exist. The successive appearance of animal forms according to an ascending hierarchy therefore in no wise proves their continual and cumulative genesis.²¹

¹⁸ *Le Figaro Littéraire*, April 20, 1957.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ The electron microscope has revealed the surprising complexity of the functions at work within a unicellular being.

²¹ The most commonly mentioned example in favour of the transformist thesis is the hypothetical genealogy of the *Equidae*. Charles Depéret criticizes it as

On the contrary, what links the various animal forms to one another is something like a common model, which reveals itself more or less through their structures and which is more apparent in the case of animals endowed with superior consciousness such as birds and mammals. This model is expressed especially in the symmetrical disposition of the body, in the number of extremities and sensory organs, and also in the general form of the chief internal organs. It might be suggested that the design and number of certain organs, and especially those of sensation, simply correspond to the terrestrial surroundings; but this argument is reversible, because those surroundings are precisely what the sensory organs grasp and delimit. In fact, the model underlying all animal forms establishes the analogy between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Against the background of this common cosmic pattern the differences between species and the gaps that separate them are all the more marked.

Instead of 'missing links', which the partisans of transformism seek in vain, nature offers us, as if in irony, a large variety of animal forms which, without transgressing the pre-established framework of a species, imitate the appearance and habits of a species or order foreign to them. Thus, for example, whales are mammals, but they assume the appearance and behaviour of fishes; hummingbirds have the appearance, iridescent colours, flight, and mode of feeding of butterflies; the armadillo is covered with scales like a reptile, although it is a mammal; and so on. Most of these animals with imitative forms are higher species that have taken on the forms of relatively lower species, a fact which *a priori* excludes an interpretation of them as intermediary links in an evolution. As for their interpretation as forms of adaptation to a given set of surroundings, this seems more than dubious, for what

follows: 'Geological observation establishes in a formal manner that no gradual passage took place between these genera; the last *Palaeotherium* had for long been extinct, without having transformed itself, when the first *Architherium* made its appearance, and the latter disappeared in its turn, without modification, before being suddenly replaced by the invasion of the *Hipparion*.' (*Les Transformations du Monde animal*, p. 107) To this it can be added that the supposed primitive forms of the horse are hardly to be observed in equine embryology, though the development of the embryo is commonly looked on as a recapitulation of the genesis of the species.

could be, for example, the intermediate forms between some land mammal or other and the dolphin?²² Among these 'imitative' forms, which constitute so many extreme cases, we must also include the fossil bird *Archaeopteryx* mentioned above.

Since each animal order represents an archetype that includes the archetypes of the corresponding species, one might well ask oneself whether the existence of 'imitative' animal forms does not contradict the immutability of the essential forms; but this is not the case, for the existence of these forms demonstrates, on the contrary, that very immutability by a logical exhausting of all the possibilities inherent in a given type or essential form. It is as if nature, after bringing forth fishes, reptiles, birds, and mammals, with their distinctive characteristics, wished still to show that she was able to produce an animal like the dolphin which, while being a true mammal, at the same time possesses almost all the faculties of a fish, or a creature like the tortoise, which possesses a skeleton covered by flesh, yet at the same time is enclosed in an exterior carapace after the fashion of certain molluscs.²³ Thus does nature manifest her protean power, her inexhaustible capacity for generation, while remaining faithful to the essential forms, which in fact are never blurred.

Each essential form or each archetype includes after its fashion all the others, but without confusion; it is like a mirror reflecting other mirrors, which reflect it in their turn.²⁴ In its deepest meaning the mutual reflection of types is an expression of the metaphysical homogeneity of Existence, or of the unity of Being.

²² On the subject of the hypothetical transformation of a land animal into the whale, Douglas Dewar writes: 'I have often challenged transformists to describe plausible ancestors situated in the intermediate phases of this supposed transformation': (*What the Animal Fossils tell us*, Trans. Vict. Instit, vol. LXXIV)

²³ It is significant that the tortoise, whose skeleton seems to indicate an extravagant adaptation to an animal 'armoured' state, appears all at once among the fossils, without evolution. Similarly, the spider appears simultaneously with its prey and with its faculty of weaving already developed.

²⁴ This is the image used by the Sufi 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī in his book *al-Insān al-Kamil*, chapter on 'Divine Unicity'.

Some biologists, when confronted with the discontinuity in the paleontological succession of species, postulate an evolution by leaps and, in order to make this theory plausible, refer to the sudden mutations observed in some living species. But these mutations never exceed the limits of an anomaly or a decadence, as for example the sudden appearance of albinos, or of dwarfs or giants; even when these characteristics become hereditary, they remain as anomalies and never constitute new specific forms.²⁵ For this to happen, it would be necessary for the vital substance of an existing species to serve as the 'plastic material' for a newly manifested specific form; in practice, this means that one or several females of this existing species would suddenly bear offspring of a new species. Now, as the hermetist Richard the Englishman writes:

Nothing can be produced from a thing that is not contained in it; for this reason, every species, every genus, and every natural order develops within the limits proper to it and bears fruits according to its own kind and not according to an essentially different order; everything that receives a seed must be of the same seed.²⁶

Fundamentally, the evolutionist thesis is an attempt to replace, not simply the 'miracle of creation', but the cosmogonic process largely suprasensory of which the Biblical narrative is a Scriptural symbol; evolutionism, by absurdly making the greater derive from the lesser, is the opposite of this process, or this 'emanation'. (This term has nothing to do with the emanationist heresy, since the transcendence and immutability of the ontological principle are here in no wise called in question.) In a word, evolutionism results from an incapacity peculiar to Modern science to conceive 'dimensions' of reality other than purely physical ones; to understand the 'vertical' genesis of species, it is worth recalling what Guénon said about the progressive solidification of the corporeal state through the various terrestrial ages.²⁷ This solidification must obviously not be taken to imply that the stones of the earliest ages were soft, for this would be tantamount to saying that certain physical qualities and in particular hardness and density were then

²⁵ Bounoure, *Déterminisme et Finalité*.

²⁶ Quoted in the *Golden Treatise, Museum Hermeticum* (Frankfurt, 1678).

²⁷ Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*.

wanting; what has hardened and become fixed with time is the corporeal state taken as a whole, with the result that it no longer receives directly the imprint of subtle forms. Assuredly, it cannot become detached from the subtle state, which is its ontological root and which dominates it entirely, but the relationship between the two states of existence no longer has the creative character that it possessed at the origin; it is as when a fruit, having reached maturity, becomes surrounded by an ever harder husk and ceases to absorb the sap of the tree. In a cyclic phase in which corporeal existence had not yet reached this degree of solidification, a new specific form could manifest itself directly from the starting-point of its first 'condensation' in the subtle or animic state;²⁸ this means that the different types of animals pre-existed at the level immediately superior to the corporeal world as non-spatial forms, but nevertheless clothed in a certain 'matter', namely that of the subtle world. From there these forms 'descended' into the corporeal state each time the latter was ready to receive them; this 'descent' had the nature of a sudden coagulation and hence also the nature of a limitation and fragmentation of the original animic form.

Indo-Tibetan cosmology describes this descent which is also a fall in the case of human beings under the form of the mythological combat of the *devas* and *asûras*: the *devas* having created man with a body that was fluid, protean, and diaphanous in other words, in a subtle form the *asûras* try to destroy it by a progressive petrification; it becomes opaque, gets fixed, and its skeleton, affected by the petrification, is immobilized. Thereupon the *devas*, turning evil into good, create joints, after having fractured the bones, and they also open the pathways of the senses, by piercing the skull, which threatens to imprison the seat of the mind. In this way the process of solidification stops before it reaches its extreme limit, and certain organs in man,

²⁸ Concerning the creation of species in a subtle 'proto-matter' in which they still preserve an androgynous form, comparable to a sphere and their subsequent exteriorization by 'crystallization' in sensible matter (which is heavy, opaque, and mortal), see Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds* (World Wisdom Books, Bloomington, Indiana, 1984), ch. 2, 'In the Wake of the Fall', and *Dimensions of Islam* (Fernhill House, New York, 1970), chap. 2, 'The Five Divine Presences'.

such as the eye, still retain something of the nature of the non-corporeal states.²⁹

In this story, the pictorial description of the subtle world must not be misunderstood. However, it is certain that the process of materialization, from the supra-sensory to the sensory, had to be reflected within the material or corporeal state itself, so that one can say without risk of error, that the first generations of a new species did not leave a mark in the great book of earthly layers; it is therefore vain to seek in sensible matter the ancestors of a species, and especially that of man.

Since the transformist theory is not founded on any real proof, its corollary and conclusion, namely the theory of the infra-human origin of man, remains suspended in the void. The facts adduced in favour of this thesis are restricted to a few groups of skeletons of disparate chronology: it happens that some skeletal types deemed to be more 'evolved', such as 'Steinheim man', precede others, of a seemingly more primitive character, such as 'Neanderthal man', even though the latter was doubtless not so apelike as tendentious reconstructions would have us believe.³⁰

If, instead of always putting the questions: at what point does humankind begin, and what is the degree of evolution of such and such a type regarded as being pre-human, we were to ask ourselves: how far does the monkey go, things might well appear in a very different light, for a fragment from a skeleton, even one related to that of man, is hardly enough to establish the presence of that which constitutes man, namely reason, whereas it is possible to conceive of a great variety of anthropoid apes whose anatomies are more or less close to that of man.

However paradoxical this may seem, the anatomical resemblance between man and the anthropoid apes is explainable precisely by the difference not gradual, but essential that separates man from all other animals. Since the anthropoid form is able to exist without that 'central' element that characterizes man this 'central' element manifesting itself

²⁹ See Krasinsky, *Tibetische Medizin-Philosophie*.

³⁰ In general, this domain of science has been almost smothered by tendentious theories, hoaxes, and imprudently popularized discoveries. See Dewar, *The Transformist Illusion*.

anatomically by his vertical position, amongst other things the anthropoid form must exist; in other words, there cannot but be found, at the purely animal level, a form that realizes in its own way that is to say, according to the laws of its own level the very plan of the human anatomy; the ape is a prefiguration of man, not in the sense of an evolutive phase, but by virtue of the law that decrees that at every level of existence analogous possibilities will be found.

A further question arises in the case of the fossils attributed to primitive men: did some of these skeletons belong to men we can look upon as being ancestors of men presently alive, or do they bear witness to a few groups that survived the cataclysm at the end of a terrestrial age, only to disappear in their turn before the beginning of our present humanity? Instead of primitive men, it might well be a case of degenerate men, who may or may not have existed alongside our real ancestors. We know that the folklore of most peoples speaks of giants or dwarfs who lived long ago, in remote countries; now, among these skeletons, several cases of gigantism are to be found.³¹

Finally, let it be recalled once more that the bodies of the most ancient men did not necessarily leave solid traces, either because their bodies were not yet at that point materialized or 'solidified', or because the spiritual state of these men, along with the cosmic conditions of their time, rendered possible a resorption of the physical body into the subtle 'body' at the moment of death.³²

We must now say a few words about a thesis, much in vogue today, which claims to be something like a spiritual integration of paleontology, but which in reality is nothing but a purely mental sublimation of the crudest materialism, with all the prejudices this includes, from belief in the indefinite progress of humanity to a levelling and totalitarian collectivism, without forgetting the cult of the machine that is at the centre of all this; it will be apparent that we are here referring to

³¹ Like the Meganthrope of Java and the *Gigantopithecus* of China.

³² In some very exceptional cases such as Enoch, Elijah, and the Virgin Mary—such a resorption took place even in the present terrestrial age.

Teilhardian evolutionism.³³ According to Teilhard de Chardin, who is not given to worrying over the gaps inherent in the evolutionist system and largely relies on the climate created by the premature popularization of the transformist thesis, man himself represents only an intermediate state in an evolution that starts with unicellular organisms and ends in a sort of global cosmic entity, united to God. The craze for trying to bring everything back to a single unequivocal and uninterrupted genetic line here exceeds the material plane and launches out wildly into an irresponsible and avid 'mentalization' characterized by an abstraction clothed in artificial images which their author ends up by taking literally, as if he were dealing with concrete realities. We have already mentioned the imaginary genealogical tree of species, whose supposed unity is no more than a snare, being composed of the hypothetical conjunction of many disjointed elements. Teilhard amplifies this notion to his heart's content, in a manner that is purely graphic, by completing its branches or 'scales', as he likes to call them and by constructing a pinnacle in the direction of which humankind is supposed to be situated. By a similar sliding of thought from the abstract to the concrete, from the metaphorical to the supposedly real, he agglutinates, in one and the same pseudo-scientific outburst, the most diverse realities, such as mechanical laws, vital forces,

³³ Teilhard's materialism is revealed in all its crudity, and all its perversity, when this philosopher advocates the use of surgical means to accelerate 'collective cerebralization' *Man's Place in Nature*, (Harper & Row, New York, 1966). Let us also quote the further highly revealing words of the same author: 'It is finally on the dazzling notion of Progress and on faith in Progress that today's divided humanity can be reformed ... Act I is over! We have access to the heart of the atom! Now come the next steps, such as the vitalization of matter by the building of supermolecules, the modelling of the human organism by hormones, the control of heredity and of the sexes by the play of genes and chromosomes, the readjustment and liberation by direct action of the springs laid bare by psychoanalysis, the awakening and taking hold of the still dormant intellectual and emotional forces in the human mass!' (*Planète* III, 1944), p. 30. Quite naturally, Teilhard proposes the fashioning of mankind by a universal scientific government in short, all that is needed for the reign of the Antichrist.

psychic elements, and spiritual entities. Let us quote a characteristic passage:

What explains the biological revolution caused by the appearance of Man, is an explosion of consciousness; and what, in its turn, explains this explosion of consciousness, is simply the passage of a privileged radius of 'corpusculization', in other words, of a zoological phylum, across the surface, hitherto impermeable, separating the zone of direct Psychism from that of reflective Psychism. Having reached, following this particular radius, a critical point of arrangement (or, as we say here, of enrolment), Life became hypercentred on itself, to the point of becoming capable of foresight and invention...³⁴

Thus, 'corpusculization' (which is a physical process) would have as its effect that a 'zoological phylum' (which is no more than a figure) should pass across the surface (purely hypothetical) separating two psychic zones ... But we must not be surprised at the absence of *distinguos* in Teilhard's thinking since, according to his own theory, the mind is but a metamorphosis of matter!

Without stopping to discuss the strange theology of this author, for whom God himself evolves along with matter, and without daring to define what he thinks of the prophets and sages of antiquity and other 'underdeveloped' beings of this kind, we will say the following: if man, in respect of both his physical nature and his spiritual nature, were really nothing but a phase of an evolution going from the amoeba to the superman, how could he know objectively where he stands in all this? Let us suppose that this alleged evolution forms a curve, or a spiral. The man who is but a fragment thereof and let it not be forgotten that a 'fragment' of a movement is no more than a phase of that movement and that man step out of it and say to himself: I am a fragment of a spiral which is developing in such and such a way? Now it is certain and moreover Teilhard de Chardin himself recognizes this that man is able to judge of his own state. Indeed he knows his own rank amongst the other earthly creatures, and he is even the only one to know objectively both himself and the world. Far from being a mere phase in an indefinite evolution, man essentially represents a central possibility, and one that is thus unique, irreplaceable, and definitive.

³⁴ *Man's Place in Nature*, pp. 62-63.

If the human species had to evolve towards another more perfect and more 'spiritual' form, man would not already now be the 'point of intersection' of the Divine Spirit with the earthly plane; he would neither be capable of salvation, nor able intellectually to surmount the flux of becoming. To express these thoughts according to the perspective of the Gospels: would God have become man if the form of man were not virtually 'god on earth', in other words, qualitatively central as well as definitive with regard to his own cosmic level?

As a symptom of our time, Teilhardism is comparable to one of those cracks that are due to the very solidification of the mental carapace,³⁵ and that do not open upward, toward the heaven of real and transcendent unity, but downward toward the realm of lower psychism. Weary of its own discontinuous vision of the world, the materialist mind lets itself slide toward a false continuity or unity, toward a pseudo-spiritual intoxication, of which this falsified and materialized faith or this sublimated materialism that we have just described marks a phase of particular significance.

(V) Modern Psychology

'The object of psychology is the psychic; unfortunately it is also its subject.' Thus wrote a famous psychologist of our time.³⁶ According to this opinion, every psychological judgement inevitably participates in the essentially subjective, not to say passionate and tendentious, nature of its object; for, according to this logic, no one understands the soul except by means of his own soul, and the latter, for the psychologist, is, precisely, purely psychic, and nothing else. Thus no psychologist, whatever be his claim to objectivity, escapes this dilemma, and the more categorical and general his affirmations in this realm are, the more they are suspect; such is the verdict that Modern psychology pronounces in its own cause, when it is being sincere towards itself. But whether it be sincere or not, the relativism expressed in the words just quoted is always inherent in it. This relativism is also a kind of

³⁵ Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, Chap. 15 'The Illusion of "Ordinary Life"'.
³⁶ C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven, Yale, 1938) p. 62

Prometheanism that would make of the psychic element the ultimate reality of man. It is the root of the numerous divergences within this discipline, and it dominates it to the point of contaminating everything that it touches: history, philosophy, art, and religion; all of them become psychological at its touch, and thereby also subjective, and thus devoid of objective and immutable certainties.³⁷

But all *a priori* relativism is inconsequential towards itself. Despite the admitted precariousness of its point of view, Modern psychology behaves like every other science: it passes judgements and believes in their validity, and in this connection it leans unwittingly, and without admitting it, on an innate certainty: indeed, if we can observe that the psychic is 'subjective', in the sense of being dominated by a certain egocentric bias that imposes on it certain limits, or by a particular 'colouring', this is because there is something in us which is not subject to these limits and tendencies, but which transcends them and in principle dominates them. This something is the intellect, and it is the intellect that normally provides us with the criteria which alone can shed light on the fluctuating and uncertain world of the *psyché*; this is obvious, but it nevertheless remains totally outside Modern scientific and philosophical thinking.

It is important above all not to confuse intellect and reason: the latter is indeed the mental reflection of the transcendent intellect, but in practice it is only what one makes of it, by which we mean that, in the case of the Modern sciences, its functioning is limited by the empirical

³⁷ 'I can find no reason to be surprised at seeing psychology exchange visits with philosophy, for is not the act of thinking, the foundation of all philosophy, a psychic activity which, as such, directly concerns psychology? Must not psychology embrace the soul in its total extension, which includes philosophy, theology, and countless other things? In the face of all the richly diversified religions, there rise up, as the supreme instance perhaps of truth or error, the immutable data of the human soul.' (C. C. Jung, *L'Homme à la Découverte de son âme* [Paris, 1962], p. 238) This amounts to replacing truth by psychology; it is totally forgotten that there are no 'immutable data' outside of that which is immutable by its own nature, namely, the intellect. In any case, if the 'act of thinking' is no more than a 'psychic activity', by what right does psychology set itself up as the 'supreme instance', since it too is but one 'psychic activity' amongst others?

method itself; at the level of the latter, reason is not so much a source of truth as a principle of coherence. For Modern psychology it is even less than that, for if scientific rationalism lends a relatively stable framework to one's observation of the physical world, it reveals itself as entirely insufficient when it comes to describing the world of the soul; for surface psychic movements, those whose causes and aims are situated on the plane of current experience, can hardly be translated into rational terms. The whole chaos of lower and mostly unconscious psychic possibilities escapes both rationality and what transcends rationality, and this means that both the major part of the psychic world and the metaphysical realm will appear 'irrational' according to this way of thinking. Hence a certain tendency, inherent in Modern psychology, to relativize reason itself, a tendency that is self-contradictory, since psychology cannot dispense with rational methods. Psychology finds itself confronted with a domain which on all sides overflows the horizon of a science founded on empiricism and Cartesianism.

For this reason, the majority of Modern psychologists ensconce themselves in a sort of pragmatism; it is in 'committed' experience, together with a coldly clinical attitude, that they see some guarantee of 'objectivity'. In point of fact, the movements of the soul cannot be studied from the outside, as in the case of corporeal phenomena; to know what they mean, they have in a sense to be lived, and this involves the subject of the observer, as was justly pointed out by the psychologist at the outset. As for the mental faculty that 'controls' the experiment, what is this but a more or less arbitrary 'common sense', one inevitably coloured by preconceived ideas? Thus the would-be objectivity of the psychic attitude changes nothing in regard to the uncertain nature of the experiment, and so, in the absence of a principle that is both inward and immutable, one returns to the dilemma of the psychic striving to grasp the psychic.

The soul, like every other domain of reality, can only be truly known by what transcends it. Moreover, this is spontaneously and implicitly admitted in people's recognition of the moral principle of justice, which demands that men should overcome their individual subjectivity. Now we could not overcome it, if the intelligence, which

guides our will, were itself nothing but a psychic reality; and intelligence would not transcend the *psyché* if, in its essence, it did not transcend the plane of phenomena, both inward and outward. This observation suffices to prove the necessity and the existence of a psychology deriving in a sense from above and not claiming *a priori* an empirical character. But although this order of things is inscribed in our very nature, it will never be recognized by Modern psychology; despite its own reactions against the rationalism of yesterday, it is no closer to metaphysics than any other empirical science indeed quite the contrary, since its perspective, which assimilates the suprarational to the irrational, predisposes it to the worst of errors.

What Modern psychology lacks entirely is criteria enabling it to situate the aspects or tendencies of the soul in their cosmic context. In traditional psychology, these criteria are provided according to two principal 'dimensions': on the one hand, according to a cosmology that 'situates' the soul and its modalities in the hierarchy of states of existence, and, on the other hand, according to a morality directed toward a spiritual end. The latter may provisionally espouse the individual horizon; it nonetheless keeps in view the universal principles attaching the soul to an order more vast than itself. Cosmology in a sense circumscribes the soul; spiritual morality sounds its depths. For just as a current of water reveals its force and direction only when it breaks against an object that resists it, so the soul can show its tendencies and fluctuations only in relation to an immutable principle; whoever wishes to know the nature of the *psyché* must resist it, and one truly resists it only when one places oneself at a point which corresponds, if not effectively then at least virtually or symbolically, to the Divine Self, or to the intellect which is like a ray that emanates from the latter.

Thus traditional psychology possesses both an impersonal and 'static' dimension (namely, cosmology), and a personal and 'operative' dimension (namely, morality or the science of the virtues), and it is necessarily so, because genuine knowledge of the soul results from knowledge of oneself. He who, by the eye of his essence, is able to 'objectivize' his own psychic form, by that very fact knows all the possibilities of the psychic or subtle world; and this intellectual 'vision' is both the outcome and, if need be, the guarantor of every sacred science of the soul.

For the majority of Modern psychologists, traditional morality which they readily confuse with a purely social or conventional morality is nothing but a kind of psychic dam, useful on occasion but more often a hindrance or even harmful for the 'normal' development of the individual. This opinion is propagated especially by Freudian psychoanalysis, which became widely applied in some countries, where it has practically usurped the function that elsewhere belongs to the sacrament of confession: the psychiatrist replaces the priest, and the bursting of complexes that had previously been repressed takes the place of absolution. In ritual confession the priest is but the impersonal representative necessarily discreet of the Truth that judges and pardons; the penitent, by admitting his sins, in a sense 'objectivizes' the psychic tendencies that these sins manifest. By repenting, he detaches himself from them, and by receiving sacramental absolution, his soul is virtually reintegrated in its primitive equilibrium and centred on its divine essence. In the case of Freudian psychoanalysis,³⁸ on the other hand, man lays bare his psychic entrails, not before God, but to his fellow. He does not distance himself from the chaotic and obscure depths of his soul, which the analyst unveils or stirs up, but on the contrary, he accepts them as his own, for he must say to himself: 'This is what I am like in reality.' And if he does not overcome, with the help of some salutary instinct, this kind of disillusionment from below, he will retain from it something like an intimate sully; in most cases it will be his self-abandonment to collective mediocrity that for him will play the part of absolution, for it is easier to endure one's own degradation when it is shared with others. Whatever may be the occasional or partial usefulness of such an analysis in certain cases, the state described above is its more usual result, its premises being what they are.³⁹

³⁸ The use of the adjective is to make it clear that it is indeed the method of Freud that we are discussing here, for in our own day some forms of psychoanalysis are more neutral and less pernicious, a fact which, from our point of view, is in no wise a justification.

³⁹ René Guénon has observed that the principle whereby every psychoanalyst requires to be psychoanalyzed himself before being empowered to analyze others, raises the troublesome question as to who occupied the first place in the queue.

If the medicine of the traditional civilizations knows nothing analogous to Modern psychotherapy, this is because the psychic cannot be treated by the psychic. The *psyché* is the realm of indefinite actions and reactions. By its own specific nature, it is essentially unstable and deceptive, so that it can be cured only by resorting to something situated 'outside' or 'above' it. In some cases one will act favourably upon it by re-establishing the humoral balance of the body, commonly upset by psychic affections;⁴⁰ in other cases it is only by the use of spiritual means, such as exorcism,⁴¹ prayer, or a sojourn in holy places, that the soul can be restored to health.

Everyone is aware of the fact that Modern psychology tries to explain psychologically the spiritual means just mentioned. In its eyes, the effect of a rite is one thing, and its theological or mystical interpretation is another. The effect of a rite, arbitrarily limited to the psychic and subjective domain alone, is attributed to psychic dispositions of ancestral origin, which the form of the rite is supposed to actualize. There is no hint of the timeless and superhuman meaning inherent in the rite or symbols if the soul could cure itself through believing in the illusory projection of its own preoccupations, whether individual or collective. There is nothing, however, in this supposition that would trouble Modern psychology, since it is ready to go much further than this, when it asserts, for example, that the fundamental forms of thought, the laws of logic, merely represent a residue of ancestral habits.⁴² This path is one that leads to the outright denial of intelligence and to its replacement by biological fatalities, if indeed psychology can go that far without encompassing its own ruin.

⁴⁰ Usually a vicious circle ensues, with the psychic imbalance engendering a physical intoxication, which in its turn causes the psychic imbalance to worsen.

⁴¹ Cases of diabolical possession, such as manifestly call for the application of the rites of exorcism, seem to have become rarer nowadays, doubtless because demonic influences are no longer 'compressed' by the dam of tradition, but are able to spread more or less everywhere in forms that are in a fashion 'diluted'.

⁴² They will say, for example, that logic is merely an expression of the physiological structure of our brain, and forget that, were it so, this statement would also be an expression of this same physiological fatality.

In order to be able to 'situate' the soul in relation to other cosmic realities or realms, one must refer to the cosmological scheme that represents the degrees of existence in the form of concentric circles or spheres. This scheme, which makes symbolical use of the geocentric conception of the visible universe, symbolically identifies the corporeal world with our terrestrial surroundings; around this centre extends the sphere or spheres of the subtle or psychic world, surrounded in turn by the sphere of the world of pure Spirit. This representation is naturally limited by its own spatial character, but it nevertheless expresses very well the relationship that exists between these various states. Each of the spheres, considered in itself, presents itself as a complete and perfectly homogeneous whole, whereas from the 'point of view' of the sphere immediately above, it is but a content thereof. Thus the corporeal world, envisaged at its own level, does not know the subtle world, just as the latter does not know the supra-formal world, precisely because it encloses only that which has a form. Furthermore, each of these worlds is known and dominated by that which exceeds and surrounds it. It is from the immutable and formless background of the Spirit that the subtle realities become detached as forms, and it is the soul which, through its sensory faculties, knows the corporeal.

This double relationship of things, which *a priori* hidden from our individual vision, can be grasped in all its reality when one considers the very nature of sensible perception. On the one hand, this truly reaches the corporeal world, and no philosophical artifice will be able to convince us of the contrary; on the other hand, there is no doubt that all we perceive of the world are but those 'images' of it that our mental faculty is able to keep hold of, and in this respect the whole fabric of impressions, memories, and anticipations in short, everything that for us constitutes the sensible continuity and logical coherence of the world is of a psychic or subtle nature. It is in vain that one will try to know what the world is 'outside' this subtle continuity, since this 'outside' does not exist: surrounded as it is by the subtle state, the corporeal world is but a content thereof, even though it appears, in the mirror of this state itself, as a materially autonomous order.⁴³

⁴³ Nothing is more absurd than attempts to explain the perception of the material world in material terms.

It is obviously not the individual soul, but the entire subtle state that contains the physical world. The logical coherence of the latter presupposes the unity of the former, and this is manifested indirectly by the fact that the multiple individual visions of the sensible world, fragmentary though they be, substantially coincide and are integrated in one continuous whole. The individual soul participates in this unity both by the structure of its cognitive faculties, which is in conformity with the cosmic order, and also by its nature as subject, containing the physical world in its own way; in other words, the physical world is a 'world' only in relation to the individual subject, by virtue of the cleaving of consciousness into object and subject, a cleaving that results precisely from the 'egoic' polarization of the soul. By this same polarization, the soul is distinguished from the totality of the subtle state the 'total' or 'universal soul' of Plotinus without, however, being separated from it substantially. For if it were separated from it, our vision of the world would not be adequate to reality; but in fact it is so, in spite of the limitations and the relativity of all perception.

It is true that we ordinarily perceive only a fragment of the subtle world the fragment that we 'are', and that constitutes our 'myself' whereas the sensible world reveals itself to us in its macrocosmic continuity, as a whole that seems to include us. This is because the subtle world is the very field of individuation; in reality, we are plunged in the ocean of the subtle world as fishes are in water, and like them, we do not see that which constitutes our own element.

As for the opposition between the 'inward' psychic world and the 'outward' corporeal world, this is actualized only in relation to, and in function of, the latter. In itself, the subtle world is neither 'inward' nor 'outward'; it is at most 'non-outward', whereas the corporeal world is outward as such, which furthermore proves that it does not enjoy an autonomous existence.

The corporeal state and the psychic state together constitute formal existence; in its total extension, the subtle state is none other than formal existence, but one calls it 'subtle' inasmuch as it escapes the laws of corporeity. According to one of the most ancient and most natural symbolisms, the subtle state may be compared to the atmosphere surrounding the earth which pervades all porous bodies and is the vehicle of life.

A phenomenon can only be truly understood through its relations, both 'horizontal' and 'vertical', with total Reality. This truth applies particularly, and in a certain sense practically, to psychic phenomena. The same psychic 'event' can simultaneously be the response to a sensory impulsion, the manifestation of a wish, the consequence of a previous action, the trace of the typical and ancestral form of the individual, the expression of his genius, and the reflection of a supra-individual reality. It is legitimate to consider the psychic phenomenon in question under one or other of these aspects, but it would be unwarranted to seek to explain the movements and purposes of the soul by one or even by several of these aspects exclusively. In this connection let us quote the words of a therapist who is aware of the limitations of contemporary psychology:

There is an ancient Hindu maxim whose truth is incontestable: 'What a man thinks, that he becomes'. If one steadfastly thinks of good deeds, one will end by becoming a good man; if one always thinks of weakness, one will become weak; if one thinks of how to develop one's strength (bodily or mental), one will become strong. Similarly, if for years one is engaged almost daily in stirring up Hades,⁴⁴ in explaining systematically the higher in terms of the lower, and at the same time ignoring everything in man's cultural history which, despite lamentable errors and misdeeds, has been regarded as worthwhile, one can scarcely avoid the risk of losing all discernment, of levelling down the imagination (a source of our life), and of severely reducing one's mental horizon.⁴⁵

Ordinary consciousness illuminates only a restricted portion of the individual soul, and the latter represents only a tiny part of the psychic world. Nevertheless, the soul is not cut off from the rest of this world; its situation is not that of a body rigorously limited by its own extension and separated from other bodies. What distinguishes the soul

⁴⁴ An allusion to the words of Virgil *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* ('If I cannot bend the Heavens, I shall stir up hell'), which Freud quoted at the beginning of his *Interpretation of Dreams*.

⁴⁵ Hans Jacob, *Western Psychology and Hindu Sâdhana* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1961). The author of this work is a former disciple of Jung, who later discovered the doctrine and method immeasurably greater of the Hindu *sâdhana*, which enabled him to subject Western psychology to a just criticism.

from the rest of the vast subtle world is uniquely its own particular tendencies, which define it if one may employ a simplified image as a spatial direction defines the ray of light that follows it. By these very tendencies, the soul is in communion with all the cosmic possibilities of analogous tendencies or qualities; it assimilates them and is assimilated by them. For this reason, the science of cosmic tendencies the *gunas* of Hindu cosmology is fundamental for the knowledge of the soul. In this connection, it is not the outward context of a psychic phenomenon the accidental occasion for its manifestation that matters essentially, but its connection with *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas* the 'upward', 'expansive', and 'downward' tendencies which confers on it its rank in the hierarchy of inward values.

Since the motives of the soul are perceptible only through the forms that manifest them, it is on these forms or manifestations that a psychological assessment must needs be founded. Now, the part played by the *gunas* in any form whatsoever can be measured only in a purely qualitative manner, by means of precise and decisive but in no wise quantitative criteria, such as are entirely lacking in the wholly profane psychology of our time.

There are some psychic 'events' whose repercussions traverse all the degrees of the subtle world 'vertically', since they touch on the essences; others these are ordinary psychic movements only obey the 'horizontal' coming and going of the *psyché*; and finally, there are those that come from the subhuman depths. The first mentioned are not capable of being expressed entirely they comprise an element of mystery and yet the forms which they may from time to time evoke in the imagination are clear and precise, like those that characterize authentic sacred arts. The last mentioned, namely demonic 'inspirations', are unintelligible in their very forms; they 'ape' the genuinely mysterious by the nebulous, obscure, and equivocal character of their formal manifestations; examples of this are readily to be found in contemporary art.

When studying the formal manifestation of the soul, one must, however, not forget that man's psycho-physical organism can display strange caesuras or discontinuities. Thus, for instance, in the case of the somewhat 'anarchical' category of contemplatives known as 'fools of God', the spiritual states do not manifest themselves harmoniously

and normally and do not make use of the reason; inversely, an intrinsically pathological state and as such dominated by infra-human and chaotic tendencies may incidentally and by accident comprise openings onto supra-terrestrial realities; this is but saying that the human soul is of an inexhaustible complexity.

Viewed as a whole, the subtle world is incomparably vaster and more varied than the corporeal world. Dante expresses this by making the entire hierarchy of planetary spheres correspond to the subtle world, whereas he makes only the terrestrial domain correspond to the corporeal world. The subterranean position of the hells, in his system, merely indicates that the states in question are situated below the normal human state; in reality, they are also part of the subtle state, and this is why some medieval cosmologists place the hells symbolically between heaven and earth.⁴⁶

Experience of the subtle world is subjective except in the case of certain sciences quite unknown to the moderns because consciousness, in identifying itself with subtle forms, is affected by their tendencies, just as a ray of light is turned from its course by the form of a wave that it happens to traverse. The subtle world is made up of forms; in other words, it comprises diversity and contrast; but these forms do not possess, in themselves or outside of their projection in the sensible imagination,⁴⁷ spatial and defined contours as in the case of corporeal forms. They are entirely active or, to be more exact, dynamic, pure activity belonging only to the essential 'forms' or archetypes that are to be found in the pure Spirit. Now the ego or individual soul is itself one of the forms of the subtle world, and the consciousness that espouses this form is necessarily dynamic and exclusive; it realizes other subtle forms only insofar as these become modalities of its own egoic form.

Thus it is that in the dream state individual consciousness, even though reabsorbed into the subtle world, nonetheless remains turned

⁴⁶ In Islam, it is said that the throne of the devil is located between earth and heaven, a doctrine which also makes clear the temptations to which those who follow the 'vertical' path are exposed.

⁴⁷ If some masters have compared the subtle world to the imagination, it is the imaginative activity, and not the images produced by the imagination, that they had in view.

back on itself; all the forms that it experiences in this state present themselves as simple prolongations of the individual subject, or at least they appear so in retrospect and inasmuch as they verge on the waking state. For in itself, and despite this subjectivism, the consciousness of the dreamer is obviously not impermeable to influences coming from the most diverse 'regions' of the subtle world, as is proved, for example, by premonitory or telepathic dreams, which many people have experienced.⁴⁸ Indeed, while the imagery of a dream is woven from the very 'substance' of the subject a 'substance' that is none other than the progressive actualization of his own psychic form it nonetheless manifests, incidentally and to different degrees, realities of a cosmic order.

The content of a dream can be considered in many different ways. If one analyzes the *materia* of which it is composed one will find that it is constituted by all sorts of memories, and in this respect the current psychological explanation, which makes the dream the expression of subconscious residues, is largely right. It is not, however, excluded that a dream may also comprise 'matters' that in no wise proceed from the personal experience of the dreamer and that are like traces of a psychic transfusion from one individual to another. There is also the economy of the dream, and in this connection we can quote the following description by C. G. Jung, which is exact despite the radically false theses of the author:

The dream, deriving from the activity of the unconscious, gives a representation of the contents that slumber there; not of all the contents that figure in it, but only of certain of them which, by way of association, are actualized, crystallized, and selected, in correlation with the momentary state of consciousness.⁴⁹

As for the hermeneutics of dreams, this eludes modern psychology in spite of the latter's efforts in this direction, because one cannot validly interpret images reflected by the soul without knowing to which level of reality they refer.

The images one retains on waking from a dream generally represent only a shadow of the psychic forms experienced in the dream state

⁴⁸ Empirical psychology no longer dares to deny this phenomenon.

⁴⁹ *L'Homme à la Découverte de son Ame*, p. 205.

itself. On passing into the waking state, a sort of decantation occurs one can be aware of this and something of the reality inherent in the dream evaporates more or less rapidly. There exists, nevertheless, a certain category of dreams, well-known to traditional oneirocrisy, the memory of which persists with an incisive clarity, and this can happen even if the profound content of these dreams appears to conceal itself. Such dreams, which mostly occur at dawn and continue until waking, are accompanied by an irrefutable feeling of objectivity; otherwise put, they comprise a more than merely mental certainty. But what characterizes them above all, and independently of their moral influence on the dreamer, is the high quality of their forms, disengaged from every turbid or chaotic residue. These are the dreams that come from the Angel; in other words, from the Essence that connects the soul to the supra-formal states of the being.

Since there are dreams of divine or angelic inspiration, their opposite must also exist, and these are dreams of satanic impulsion, containing palpable caricatures of sacred forms. The sensation accompanying them is not one of cool and serene lucidity, but of obsession and vertigo; it is the attraction of an abyss. The infernal influences sometimes ride the wave of a natural passion, which opens the way for them, so to speak. They are, however, distinguishable from the elementary character of passion by their prideful and negative tendency, accompanied either by bitterness or else by sadness. As Pascal said: 'He who tries to play the angel will play the beast', and indeed nothing is so apt to provoke caricatures, both in dreams and out of them, as the unconsciously pretentious attitude of the man who mixes God with his own highly particularized ego the classical cause of many of the psychoses studied by post-Freudian psychologism.⁵⁰

It was starting from the analysis of dreams that C. G. Jung developed his famous theory about the 'collective unconscious'. His observation of the fact that a certain category of dream images could not be explained simply on the basis of their being residues of individual experiences led Jung to distinguish, within the unconscious domain

⁵⁰ In a general way, contemporary psychology delves into the observation of pathological cases, and views the soul only through this clinical perspective.

whence dreams are fed, between a 'personal' zone whose contents represent basically the other face of individual psychic life, and a 'collective' zone made up of latent psychic dispositions of an impersonal character, such as never offer themselves to direct observation, but manifest themselves indirectly through 'symbolic' dreams and 'irrational' impulsions. At first sight, this theory has nothing extravagant about it, except its use of the term 'irrational' in connection with symbolism. It is easy to understand that the individual consciousness centred on the empirical ego leaves on the margin or even outside itself everything which, in the psychic order, is not effectively attached to that centre, just as a light projected in a given direction decreases towards the surrounding darkness. But this is not how Jung understands the matter. For him, the non-personal zone of the soul is unconscious as such; in other words, its contents can never become the direct object of the intelligence, whatever be its modality or however great its extension.

Just as the human body displays a common anatomy, independently of racial differences, so also the *psyché* possesses, beyond all cultural and mental differences, a common *substratum*, which I have named the collective unconscious. This unconscious *psyché*, which is common to all men, is not made up of contents capable of becoming conscious, but solely of latent dispositions giving rise to certain reactions that are always identical.⁵¹

And the author goes on to insinuate that it is here a question of ancestral structures that have their origin in the physical order:

The fact that this collective unconscious exists is simply the psychic expression of the identity of cerebral structures beyond all racial differences ... the different lines of psychic evolution start out from one and the same trunk, whose roots plunge through all the ages. It is here that the psychic parallel with the animal is situated.⁵²

One notices the plainly Darwinian turn of this thesis, the disastrous consequences of which show themselves in the following passage: 'It is this that explains the analogy, indeed the identity, of mythological

⁵¹ C. G. Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (New York, 1931), Introduction.

⁵² *Ibid.*

motives and of symbols as means of human communication in general.⁵³ Myths and symbols would thus be the expression of an ancestral psychic fund that brings man near to the animal! They have no intellectual or spiritual foundation, since

from the purely psychological point of view, it is a question of common instincts of imagining and acting. All conscious imagination and action have evolved on the basis of these unconscious prototypes and remain permanently attached to them, and this is especially so when consciousness has not yet attained a very high degree of lucidity, in other words, as long as it is still, in all its functions, more dependent on instinct than on conscious will, or more affective than rational ...⁵⁴

This quotation clearly indicates that, for Jung, the 'collective unconscious' is situated 'below', at the level of physiological instincts. It is important to bear this in mind, since the term 'collective unconscious' in itself could carry a wider and in a fashion more spiritual meaning, as certain assimilations made by Jung seem to suggest, especially his use or rather his usurpation of the term 'archetype' to signify the latent, and as such inaccessible, contents of the 'collective unconscious'. For though the archetypes do not belong to the psychic realm, but to the world of pure Spirit, they are nevertheless reflected at the psychic level as virtualities of images in the first place before becoming crystallized, according to the circumstances, in images properly so-called, so that a certain psychological application of the term 'archetype' could at a pinch be justified. But Jung defines the 'archetype' as an 'innate complex'⁵⁵ and describes its action on the soul thus: 'Possession by an archetype makes of a man a purely collective personage, a kind of mask, under which human nature can no longer develop, but degenerates progressively.'⁵⁶ As if an archetype, which is an immediate and supra-formal determination of Being and non-limitative by this very fact could in some way cast a spell on and vampirize the soul! What is really in question in the more or less pathological case envisaged by Jung? Simply a dissociation of the possibilities inherent in the subtle

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ See *L'Homme à la Découverte de son Âme*, p. 311.

⁵⁶ See *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (Pantheon, New York, 1966), p. 234.

form of a man, a form that includes multiple aspects, each of which has something unique and irreplaceable about it. In every non-degenerate human individual there is to be found in potency a man and a woman, a father and a mother, a child and an old man, as well as various qualities or 'dignities' inseparable from the original and ontological position of man, such as priestly and royal qualities, those of a creative craftsman, of a servant, and so forth. Normally all these possibilities complete one another; here there is no irrational fund of the soul, for the coexistence of these diverse possibilities or aspects of the human form is perfectly intelligible in itself and can be hidden only from the eyes of a mentality or civilization that has become one-sided and false. Any genius-like development of one of these multiple possibilities or dispositions inherent in the human soul requires, moreover, the integration of the complementary possibilities; the true man of genius is a balanced being, for where there is no balance there is no greatness either. The opposite of such a development is a barren and pathological exaggeration of one of the soul's possibilities at the expense of the others, leading to that kind of moral caricature compared by Jung to a mask; and let it be added that it is the carnivalesque mask one must think of here, and not the sacred mask which, for its part, does indeed express a true archetype and therefore a possibility that does not bewitch the soul but on the contrary liberates it.⁵⁷

Psychic dissociation always produces a fixation as well as a tearing apart between opposing poles, and this is rendered possible only by the clouding over of that which, in the soul, corresponds to the archetype. At the antipodes of this imbalance productive of hypertrophies, perfect virility, for example, in no wise excludes femininity, but on the contrary includes and adapts it, and the inverse is also true. Similarly, the genuine archetypes, which are not situated at the psychic level, do not mutually exclude but comprise and imply one another. According to the Platonic and hallowed meaning of the term, the archetypes are the source of being and knowledge and not, as Jung conceives them, unconscious dispositions to act and imagine. The fact that the archetypes cannot be grasped by discursive thought has no connection with

⁵⁷ See the chapter 'The Sacred Mask' in the present book.

the irrational and obscure character of the supposed 'collective unconscious', whose contents are said to be known only indirectly through their 'eruptions' on the surface. There is not only discursive thought, there is also intellectual intuition, and this attains to the archetypes from the starting-point of their symbols.

No doubt the theory according to which ancestral structures constitute the 'collective unconscious' imposes itself on modern thought all the more easily in that it seems to be in agreement with the evolutionist explanation of the instinct of animals. According to this view, instinct is the expression of the heredity of a species, of an accumulation of analogous experiences down the ages. This is how they explain, for example, the fact that a flock of sheep hastily gathers together around the lambs the moment it perceives the shadow of a bird of prey, or that a kitten while playing already employs all the tricks of a hunter, or that birds know how to build their nests. In fact, it is enough to watch animals to see that their instinct has nothing of an automatism about it. The formation of such a mechanism by a purely cumulative and consequently vague and problematical process is highly improbable, to say the least. Instinct is a non-reflective modality of the intelligence; it is determined, not by a series of automatic reflexes, but by the 'form' the qualitative determination of the species. This form is like a filter through which the universal intelligence is manifested. Nor must it be forgotten that the subtle form of a being is incomparably more complex than its bodily form. The same is also true for man: his intelligence too is determined by the subtle form of his species. This form, however, includes the reflective faculty, which allows of a singularization of the individual such as does not exist among the animals. Man alone is able to objectivize himself. He can say: 'I am this or that.' He alone possesses this two-edged faculty. Man, by virtue of his own central position in the cosmos, is able to transcend his specific norm; he can also betray it, and sink lower; *corruptio optimi pessima*. A normal animal remains true to the form and genius of its species; if its intelligence is not reflective and objectifying, but in some sort existential, it is nonetheless spontaneous; it is assuredly a form of the universal intelligence even if it is not recognized as such by men who, from prejudice or ignorance, identify intelligence with discursive thought exclusively.

As for Jung's thesis that certain dreams, which cannot be explained by personal reminiscences and which seem to arise from an unconscious fund common to all men, contain motives and forms that are also to be found in myths and in traditional symbolism, the thing is possible in principle; not that there is in the soul a repertory of types inherited from distant ancestors and bearing witness to a primitive vision of the world, but because true symbols are always 'actual' inasmuch as they express non-temporal realities. In fact, under certain conditions, the soul is able to take on the function of a mirror that reflects, in a purely passive and imaginative manner, universal truths contained in the intellect. Nevertheless, 'inspirations' of this nature remain fairly rare; they depend on circumstances that are, so to speak, providential, as in the case of dreams communicating truths or announcing future events, to which allusion has previously been made. Moreover, symbolic dreams are not clothed in just any traditional 'style'; their formal language is normally determined by the tradition or religion to which the individual is effectively or virtually attached, for there is nothing arbitrary in this domain.

Now, if one examines examples of supposedly symbolical dreams quoted by Jung and other psychologists of his school, one notices that in most cases it is a matter of false symbolism, of the kind commonly met with in pseudo-spiritual circles. The soul is not only a sacred mirror; more often it is a magic mirror that deceives the one who views himself in it. Jung should have known this, since he himself speaks of the tricks of the *anima*, indicating by this term the feminine aspect of the soul; and some of his own experiences, as described in his memoirs,⁵⁸ should have told him that an investigator of the unconscious depths of the *psyché* exposes himself, not merely to the wiles of the egocentric soul, but also to psychic influences coming from elsewhere, from unknown beings and entities, especially when the methods of

⁵⁸ The kind of introspection practised by Jung by way of psychological investigation and of which he speaks in his memoirs, as well as certain parapsychological phenomena that he provoked by this method, takes one into a frankly spiritualistic ambience. The fact that the author proposed to study these phenomena 'scientifically' changes nothing in regard to the influence they in fact had on his theory of 'archetypes'.

analysis used derive from hypnosis or medium ship. In this context must be placed certain designs executed by sick patients of Jung and which the latter tries to palm off as genuine *mandalas*.⁵⁹

Over and above all this, there exists a symbolism, very general in nature and inherent in language itself, as for instance when one compares truth to light and error to darkness, or progress to an ascent or moral danger to an abyss, or when one represents fidelity by a dog or craftiness by a fox. Now, to explain the occurrence of a similar symbolism in dreams, of which the language is naturally figurative and not discursive, there is no need to refer to a 'collective unconscious'; it is enough to note that rational thought is not the whole of thought and that consciousness in the waking state does not cover the whole domain of mental activity. If the figurative language of dreams is not discursive, this does not necessarily make it irrational, and it is possible, as indeed Jung has properly observed, that a dreamer may be more intelligent in his dreams than in the waking state. It would even seem that this difference of level between the two states is fairly frequent among men of our own time, doubtless because the frameworks imposed by modern life are particularly unintelligent and incapable of vehicling in any normal manner the essential contents of human life.

This has obviously nothing to do with the role of purely symbolic or sacred dreams, whether these be spontaneous or evoked through rites; we are thinking here of the example of the Indians of North America, whose whole tradition, as well as their vital ambience, favours a kind of oneiric prophetism.

So as to neglect no aspect of this question, the following should also be said: In every collectivity that has become unfaithful to its own traditional form, to the sacred framework of its life, there occurs a collapse or a sort of mummification of the symbols it had received, and this process will be reflected in the psychic life of every individual belonging to that collectivity and participating in that infidelity. To every truth there corresponds a formal trace, and every spiritual form projects a psychic shadow; when these shadows are all that remains, they do in fact take on the character of ancestral phantoms that haunt the

⁵⁹ See the Introduction to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

subconscious. The most pernicious of psychological errors is to reduce the meaning of symbolism to such phantoms.

As for the definition of 'unconscious', it must never be forgotten that this is eminently relative and provisional. Consciousness is capable of gradation like light and is similarly refracted in contact with the media it meets. The ego is the form of individual consciousness, not its luminous source. The latter coincides with the source of the intelligence itself. In its universal nature, consciousness is in a sense an existential aspect of the intellect, and this amounts to saying that basically nothing is situated outside it.⁶⁰ Whence it follows that the 'unconscious' of the psychologists is quite simply everything which, in the soul, lies outside ordinary consciousness that of the empirical 'I' oriented towards the corporeal world in other words, this 'unconscious' is made to include both lower chaos and the higher states. The latter (which the Hindus compare to the bliss of deep sleep, the state of *prajna*) radiate from the luminous source of the Universal Spirit; the definition of the 'unconscious' thus in no wise corresponds to a particular concrete modality of the soul. Many of the errors of 'depth psychology', of which Jung is one of the chief protagonists, result from the fact that it operates with the 'unconscious' as if it were a definite entity. One often hears it said that Jung's psychology has 're-established the autonomous reality of the soul'. In truth, according to the perspective inherent in this psychology, the soul is neither independent of the body nor immortal; it is merely a sort of irrational fatality situated outside any intelligible cosmic order. If the moral and mental behaviour of man were determined behind the scenes by some collection of ancestral 'types' issuing from a fund that is completely unconscious and completely inaccessible to the intelligence, man would be as if suspended between two irreconcilable and divergent realities, namely that of things and that of the soul.

For all modern psychology, the luminous point of the soul, or its existential summit, is the consciousness of the 'I', which only exists to the extent that it can disengage itself from the darkness of the 'unconscious'. Now, according to Jung, this darkness contains the vital roots

⁶⁰ Let us here recall the Vedantic ternary *Sat-chit-ananda* (Being, Consciousness, Bliss).

of the individuality: the 'collective unconscious' would then be endowed with a regulatory instinct, a kind of somnambulant wisdom, no doubt of a biological nature; from this fact, the conscious emancipation of the ego would comprise the danger of a vital uprooting. According to Jung, the ideal is a balance between the two poles the conscious and the unconscious a balance that can be realized only by the help of a third term, a sort of centre of crystallization, which he calls the 'self', a term borrowed from the doctrines of Hinduism. Here is what he has written on the subject:

With the sensation of the self as an irrational and indefinable entity, to which the 'I' is neither opposed nor subordinated, but to which it adheres and round which it moves in some sort, like the earth around the sun, the aim of individuation is attained. I use this term 'sensation' to express the empirical character of the relationship between the 'I' and the self. In this relationship there is nothing intelligible, for one can say nothing about the contents of the self. The 'I' is the only content of the self that we know. The individualized 'I' feels itself to be the object of a subject unknown and superior to itself. It seems to me that psychological observation here touches its extreme limit, for the idea of a self is in itself a transcendent postulate, which one can admittedly justify psychologically, but cannot prove scientifically. The step beyond science is an absolute requirement for the psychological evolution described here, for without the postulate in question I could not sufficiently formulate the psychic processes observed from experience. Because of this, the idea of a self at least possesses the value of a hypothesis like the theories about the structure of the atom. And if it be true that here too we are prisoners of an image, it is in any case a very living image, the interpretation of which exceeds my capacities. I scarcely doubt that it is a question of an image, but it is an image that contains us.⁶¹

Despite a terminology too much bound up with current scientism, one might be tempted to grant full credit to the presentiments expressed in this passage and to find in it an approach to traditional metaphysical doctrines, if Jung, in a further passage, did not relativize the notion of the self by treating it this time, not as a transcendent principle, but as the outcome of a psychological process:

⁶¹ See *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, p. 240.

One could define the self as a sort of compensation in reference to the contrast between inward and outward. Such a definition could well be applied to the self in so far as the latter possesses the character of a result, of an aim to reach, of a thing that has only been produced lime by lime and of which the experience has cost much travail. Thus, the self is also the aim of life, for it is the most complete expression of that combination of destiny we call an 'individual', and not only of man in the singular but also of a whole group, where the one is the complement of the others with a view to a perfect image.⁶²

There are some realms where dilettantism is unforgivable.

It is the balance to be realized between the unconscious and the conscious, or the integration, in the empirical 'personality', of certain forces or impulsions emanating from the unconscious, that Jung paradoxically labels as 'individuation', using a term by which was traditionally designated, not some psychological process or other, but the differentiation of individuals from the starting point of the species. But what Jung understands by this term is a kind of definitive pronouncement of the individuality which is taken as an end in itself. In such a perspective, the notion of 'self' plainly loses all metaphysical meaning, but this is not the only traditional notion that Jung appropriates in order to debase it to a purely psychological and even clinical level; thus he compares psycho-analysis, which he uses precisely to promote this 'individuation', to an initiation in the proper and sacred meaning of the term, and he even declares that psychoanalysis represents 'the only form of initiation still valid in the Modern age!'⁶³ Whence proceed a whole series of false assimilations, and intrusions into a realm where psychology is devoid of competence.⁶⁴

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ See psychological commentary of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

⁶⁴ Jung's psychological interpretation of alchemy has been expressly refuted in my book *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul* (Element Books Shaftesbury, England, 1986. Frithjof Schuon, after reading the present chapter, sent me the following reflections in writing: 'People generally see in Jungism, as compared with Freudism, a step towards reconciliation with the traditional spiritualities, but this is in no wise the case. From this point of view, the only difference is that, whereas Freud boasted of being an irreconcilable enemy of religion, Jung sympathizes with it while emptying it of its

Here it is not a case of the involuntary ignorance of some isolated seeker, for Jung carefully avoided all contact with the representatives of living tradition. During his visit to India, for example, he did not wish to see Sri Râmana Mahârishialleging a motive of insolent frivolity⁶⁵ doubtless because he feared instinctively and 'unconsciously' (it is a case for saying it) a contact with a reality that would give the lie to his theories. For him, metaphysics was but a speculation in the void or, to be more exact, an illusory attempt by the psychic to reach beyond itself, comparable to the senseless gesture of a man who would pull himself out of a mudhole by his own hair. This conception is typical of Modern psychologism, and this is why we mention it. To the absurd argument that metaphysics is only a production of the *psychè* one can immediately object that this judgement itself is but a similar production. Man lives by truth; to accept any truth, however relative it may be, is to accept that *intellectus adequatio rei*. Merely to say 'this is that' is automatically to affirm the very principle of adequation, and therefore the presence of the absolute in the relative.

contents, which he replaces by collective psychism, that is to say by something infra-intellectual and therefore anti-spiritual. In this there is an immense danger for the ancient spiritualities, whose representatives, especially in the East, are too often lacking in critical sense with regard to the Modern spirit, and this by reason of a complex of "rehabilitation"; also it is not with much surprise, though with grave disquiet, that one has come across echoes of this kind from Japan, where the psychoanalyst's "equilibrium" has been compared to the *satori* of Zen; and there is little doubt that it would be easy to meet with similar confusions in India and elsewhere. Be that as it may, the confusions in question are greatly favoured by the almost universal refusal of people to see the devil and to call him by his name, in other words, by a kind of tacit convention compounded of optimism to order, tolerance that in reality hates truth, and compulsory alignment with scientism and official taste, without forgetting "culture", which swallows everything and commits one to nothing, except complicity in its neutralism; to which must be added a no less universal and quasi-official contempt for whatever is, we will not say intellectualist, but truly intellectual, and therefore tainted, in people's minds, with dogmatism, scholasticism, fanaticism, and prejudice. All this goes hand in hand with the psychologism of our time and is in large measure its result.'

⁶⁵ See the preface to Heinrich Zimmer's book on Shri Râmana Mahârshi.

Traditional Cosmology and Modern Science

Jung breached certain strictly materialistic frameworks of modern science, but this fact is of no use to anyone, to say the least one wishes one could have rejoiced over it because the influences that filter through this breach come from lower psychism and not from the Spirit, which alone is true and alone can save us.